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The Young Life Equipping itself for God's Service

C. J. VAUGHAN D. D.

MASTER OF THE TEMPLE

THE YOUNG LIFE

EQUIPPING ITSELF FOR GOD'S SERVICE

THE YOUNG LIFE EQUIPPING ITSELF FOR GOD'S SERVICE

Four Sermons

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,

OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER, 1872.

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I.

PREPARATION.


And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel
of peace.—EPHESIANS vi. 15.

ST PAUL from his Roman prison is looking forth upon all time and two eternities. Nowhere is his view so entirely free as in this queen of Epistles. Whatever the reason, he is free even from personal memories. He stays not to recall what must have been a more than commonly populous retrospect. That three years' stay at Ephesus, longer probably than any other (save perhaps at Tarsus and Antioch) since he became a Christian, is treated here as

if it were forgotten. Like the Twelve, like the Seventy, in the trial-missions of the days of Christ's flesh, he is so full of his message that he can 'salute no man by the way.' The absence of personal reminiscences has led some critics in all times to conclude that the Epistle could not be for Ephesus. It was a doubt hasty in many ways. The salutations in St Paul's letters are by no means proportioned to his intimacy with his correspondents. The Epistles to the Corinthians, amongst whom he had spent a year and six months, are destitute of them. The Epistle to the Romans, a Church which he had not then visited, is full of them. It is evidently a fallacious test for this kind of criticism. The Epistle to the Colossians, accompanying this, and containing one passage which seems to say

(though it does not really say) that he had never seen them, has half a chapter of greetings. It is certainly noticeable, but only this, that the sister Epistle, that before us, is perfectly general, with one single exception, from the first line to the latest. It may be, according to one plausible hypothesis, that it was a circular letter, intended for several Churches, and therefore designedly left impersonal. There may have been a blank in the first verse, to be variously filled up or left blank. Yet in the parallel Epistle, expressly directed to be read in other Churches besides that to which it is addressed, no such scruple operates. The salutation of Archippus, the commendation of Onesimus, is no bar to the transmission of the letter to Laodicea, or to its public reading in the house of Nymphas. We

must look somewhat deeper for the cause of the phenomenon. We have here an Epistle (if I might use the expression) charged and saturated with Inspiration. In this one instance 'the sword of the Lord' is not 'the sword of Gideon.' The human element is here almost lost in the Divine. I know scarcely one Book of Holy Scripture which in this respect rivals it. If all Scripture had been like this, there would have been room for a theory of Inspiration which (as it is) needs modification. Not only is a man full of the Holy Ghost writing—that is true everywhere—but he is writing as such and such alone. He scarcely touches the earth which he illuminates. He is lost in the mysteries of the Unseen, and testifies, by that absorption, to the supremacy of things Divine.



His eye explores the eternity in which the Creator dwelt alone, and gathers strength for conflict and martyrdom from those inscrutable counsels which took note of things and beings that were not, wrote indelible names in a Book of Life, and drew the boundary lines of future existences of which every moment and every circumstance was as clearly foreseen and as minutely predestined as though ages and generations had not to run their round before the first foundation of the first of them should be laid in time.

You can estimate, from this faintest sketch of the opening verses of the Epistle, the improbability (if I might so speak) of there being one local allusion or one personal greeting in the latest. When St Paul descends at

last from 'the holy mount' of his more than Apocalyptic intuition, it is but to tell how these Divine determinations were realized and wrought out in time ; how the election became a calling, and the calling a sealing, and the sealing a possession, and the possession a glory ; how the Christ of predestination became the Christ of incarnation, and the Christ of humiliation, and the Christ of resurrection, and the Christ of ascension, and the Christ of dominion, and the Christ of 'headship over all things to the Church ;' how the dead in sins are quickened and raised and exalted already in Him—lifted into a new life, re-made for a Paradise not of manual but of spiritual culture, brought back from an exile of estrangement and godlessness into a home of reconciliation and com-

munion—yea, forming, themselves, a holy and magnificent temple, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, and God, through eternal ages, God in the Spirit, the Light and the Presence.

What room in such an Epistle for reminiscences and associations of earth? What place, we almost feel, for images and metaphors, temples of Diana, wonders of the world, amidst unearthly scenes and bodies celestial? We seem to be conscious, as we read this one letter, of a sort of reluctance to descend even to what is commonly called the practical. The word, I know, is inaccurate. Nothing is so practical as the spiritual. Nothing touches the spring of conduct like doctrine—if by ‘doctrine’ we understand God revealing Himself to what

this Epistle calls 'the eyes of the heart.' But, adopting the distinction, we say that St Paul finds here an unusual difficulty in turning to the practical. In the third chapter he tries to do so, and fails. 'For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles'—he is going to say, 'beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' A whole chapter intervenes. Again he loses himself in matters deeper and higher; rises once more into a region divine; extricates himself through prayer and praise, and resumes at last in the fourth chapter the interrupted and suspended application. Even now it is but to enunciate principles, themselves running up again into mystery. This is what makes the Epistle before us so dear, so precious to the Christian.

This is what makes it the model of the evangelist and the directory of the pastor. It is a standing protest in the Churches against that dull, dry, dismal detail of duties, against that morality falsely so called, under which the Church of England, for example, through the eighteenth century languished, slumbered, and sinned. St Paul knew that out of the heart are the issues of the life ; and if he discoursed upon duty, if he discoursed upon the relation of wives and husbands, of masters and slaves, he so spake as to make each a wellspring of revelation, bringing Christ into all, and kindling into a sacrifice of living devotion each act and each circumstance of the mortal being.

All this he has done. With the handcuff on his arm—with the rude rough Prætorian, some

Thracian perhaps or Illyrian, the companion, perforce, of his prayers and his exhortations—he has dictated thus far to his amanuensis these words of life and godliness : and now the ‘Finally’ is come. From his prison at Rome he will equip the soldier of all time. How far he is influenced in the choice of his figures by the neighbourhood of the camp or the presence of the soldier, we presume not to say ; remembering that in earlier days and other scenes he had (more lightly and briefly) sketched the same parallel in writing to Thessalonica. The passage has been read to-day throughout Christendom as the Epistle for the one and twentieth Sunday after Trinity ; and I have chosen from it one clause for your meditation on this opening Sunday, full of hopes and responsibilities, of

the Academical Year, earnestly praying that God may write it upon many of these hearts, and make it the motto from this day forth of many a young life, here taking its decisive colour and impress for a manhood of action and an immortality of consequence.

‘And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.’

The girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, all would be incomplete without the sandal of preparation. We read in Scripture of ‘rough places ;’ we read in Scripture of ‘slippery places :’ there are both of these on the great battle-field, which is the world. If we would ‘withstand in the evil day,’ if we would ‘stand, having done all,’ we must


complete the equipment with the sandal of preparation.

The word 'preparation' is ambiguous: the *ἑτοιμασία* of the Greek is not so. It occurs only here in the New Testament, and has some slight varieties of sense in the Old. But there is ample authority for the interpretation which I would give to it to-day. 'Preparation' is 'readiness.' The charge is, that we have the feet shod with the 'preparedness,' the 'readiness,' of the Gospel of peace.

'Ethelred the Unready' is the well-remembered title of one chapter of English story. It might be the title of many lives as God and man read them. It was not that there was a conscious deliberate purpose to betray the cause of patriotism or religion, of truth or right, of the

Church or the Gospel. The Ethelreds are of course against the Dane. In one sense, it is the worse. A thirty-five years' reign was just the mischievousness of the Unready. When he dies, there will be a better man. He stops the way. And yet he is there. He has a right to his life, and he has a right to his throne. It is scarcely a parable, brethren—it is the very case itself still.

The illustrations would be endless, if we were not helped by the context to narrow them. The scene is laid, not in still life, but in a battle. We have but to think, then, of our own lives in their aspect of conflict. And we speak, of course, of spiritual conflict; of that sort of struggle which we only incur by being Christians. What is this but the very life to which we were pledged at our Baptism—'man-



fully to fight under Christ's banner'—'to continue Christ's faithful soldier unto the life's end?' I know how easy it is to evade this warfare. I know how far smoother it seems to render a man's life, to forget altogether this pledge, this 'sacramentum,' and believe himself only, always, everywhere, among friends. I know how courtesy, and complaisance, and charity, and even humility, may be turned to account in this direction; how it may be made almost a duty to gloss over differences, and round off angularities, and presuppose agreement, and make allowance for imperfections, and hope the good and refuse to see the evil—till at last the very idea of conflict is exterminated and eradicated from the life. And God forbid that we should be quick-sighted to a brother's failings, and blind

to Christ's 'image and superscription' stamped indelibly, however faintly discernible, upon each precious spiritual coin once minted in His treasury! It is the very keenness of this consciousness of the ownership which makes us strong and earnest in combating that which would deface it. It is because we see Christ's purchase, it is because we see one of God's spirits, inside each body; encased and enshrined in each most frail, most imperfect, most sinful life, which meets us on earth's common trivial highway—it is therefore that we would wrestle with the spirit-hosts of evil which have occupied and desolated it. We know that what God speaks of is always the reality. No kingcraft or priestcraft, no Gregory or Constantine, can stay by change of name or form the internecine

strife, earth-wide and age-long, between good and evil. It lies deeper than national conversions or European reformations. It rages still, in hearts and lives. And though the blessing of even a nominal Christendom is above gold and precious stone, it does but leave where it was the spiritual strife and the individual responsibility: it does but render more obscure, more perplexed, more difficult, the personal warfare, because it gives added force to the burning words of St Paul, 'We wrestle, not against flesh and blood.'

You see then the double risk, in this complication of the struggle, of that unreadiness which is our subject. The separate encounters, of which the life's sum is the defeat or victory of the Christian, are generally unexpected, sudden,

and impalpable. They come to us, not so much in the form of open sinners, bitter scoffers, or avowed infidels, warning us off by their look, or sounding the alarm by their utterance. They come to us, not like the profligates in the Proverbs, saying, 'Let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent. . . . Cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse : ' on the contrary, so far as the persons of our warfare are concerned, they are men like us, or better than we ; full of kindly sentiment, full of knowledge and ability, men whom it is pleasant to meet, honourable to know. And to stand aloof, as though either our faith or our conduct gave us the advantage over them, to treat them with suspicion, to read them moral lectures, to reprove them for carelessness or

heterodoxy, to wear armour in their presence as though they were our enemies, would be not only a misery but a folly and a presumption, destroying the hope of profiting them, and dishonouring by the very spirit and temper the cause and Gospel of the Saviour. And yet, my brethren, from this very converse we return home, again and again, conscious that we have practically betrayed or denied Him. In our hearing, soldiers of Christ as we call ourselves, words were spoken, principles were avowed, judgments were passed, acts were estimated, not in accordance with Christ's rules, nay, on suppositions, tacit yet evident, which would have made His Cross and His Crown alike superfluous and nugatory. We sate by, not with the excuse (itself insufficient) of

mortal terror, of imminent martyrdom, if we should say the word for Christ ; no, in security, in calm, in indifference ; or, if not that, then in awkward irresolution, in the surprise of unpreparedness ; because we expected no such trial, because we never thought that that sort of thing was the Christian conflict, because we took it for granted that society was recreation, because we would not spoil an enjoyment, our own or another's, by what we called to ourselves 'dragging in religion.' Yes, but, to go a little deeper, for this other and truer reason, because we had omitted to prepare ourselves for all risks by a habit and temper of watchfulness ; because we had refused to listen betimes to St Paul's counsel before us, 'Stand therefore—having your feet shod with the pre-

paration of the gospel of peace.' Therefore we lost our opportunity. The word of quiet, firm, self-controlled correction was not in time to be spoken. In conversation there are 'no footsteps backward.' The stream hastens by, and in vain do we watch on the brink for the 'sacred waters' to 'flow upward.' Meet emblem of the fugitiveness of all opportunity! Solemn memento of the responsibility of circumstance! Awful warning, too, of that which shall be the retrospect of a life's unreadiness; the harvest past, the summer ended, and we ourselves unsaved!

There is another aspect of the precept, which suggests itself forcibly before this audience.

We would not exaggerate—it is foolish as

well as wrong to do so—the special perils of our generation. We cannot compare. We see but the present. Past and future are alike and equally out of our ken. But we must be blind and deaf and stupid, if we do not take account of the positive. We hear, we read, we know, that there is a shaking of faiths, an unsettlement of foundations, existing and extending itself, in reference to matters lying yet deeper than our very Christianity ; such elements and rudiments, for example, of religion, as the possibility of prayer, the immateriality of the soul, and the personality of God Himself. And we know also that on the side of this advanced scepticism men appeal confidently to what they call science ; loudly proclaiming the incompatibility of proved and incontrovertible fact and law

with the most fundamental principles of (at all events) revealed religion.

You will not imagine that I am proposing to enter into such questions to-day. We are assembled in this house of prayer on the basis and presupposition not of religion only but of revelation. As a Christian I speak to you : as Christians you listen. Evidences, whether of miracle or prophecy, whether of Christian morals or Christian character, whether of the suitableness of the Gospel to man's want, or of the perfection, in life and mind, of Him who is the Gospel, appear to me to be more properly unfolded in books or lectures, where there is no risk of disturbing or distressing worshippers whose faith is stedfast.

My purpose is different. I would seize

the moment which is given me to urge upon you the risk of unreadiness in reference to these gigantic battles of our generation. You are here with one single object: to make preparation. Before you lies an unexplored, an inscrutable future. You may succeed or fail in your ambitions. You may be famous or obscure in your generation; you may be happy or sorrowful in your home; you may die late or early: these things none can forecast. But, as your day will most surely have in God's sight its twelve hours in full tale; as every life is in God's sight complete; as character and influence and destiny will unquestionably shape themselves, and He, the Judge of all, will be able to write infallibly on your gravestone, 'He did good,' or 'He did evil;' so, amongst other

things, nay, as the root of all, you will have a mind, one way or the other, concerning truth and faith and the Gospel. If not for Christ on the whole, on the whole you will be against Him. This is what each man can contribute—his own conviction, his own influence, his own life—to the sum of the Christian evidences. It is a serious thought, a great responsibility. Now there is no doubt that the whole weight of some men is lost by their unreadiness. They are so ill educated that they simply go for nothing in the great battle. Their arguments for revelation are the mere sputterings of rage and fear. They tell against, not for the truth; men smile at them, pity them, and pass them by. How different with those who have indeed ‘shod’ themselves for the fight! How noble

the ambition, here proposed to you, in the name of Christ—older men envy you as they exhort—to make yourselves wise in all this world's learning ; to enter with all earnestness of self-devotion into the mysteries of nature and of existence ; to be quite sure, and therefore absolutely fearless in your search, that truth and *the* truth must be at one ; that nature, which is God's common working, cannot really contradict miracle, which is God's exceptional yet not less orderly working ; that science can be perilous (in a religious sense) only to the irreligious ; that to the man who will take God with him in his search, God will reveal Himself, for the satisfaction of his own soul, and for the reassurance and reconciliation (it may be) of other seekers who but for him might have

floundered into Atheism. O for a few earnest hearts—and such there are, I doubt not, I know, in this congregation—who shall take this for their province! so to trust, and doubt not, the fidelity of their God, as to give themselves to track His footsteps in earth and sea and sky, in plan and law and system and providence, on purpose that they may be ready to grapple with the arrogances of a ‘science falsely so called,’ and both to reanimate the doubting and to convict and confute the gainsayers!

This University has been fertile in such intellects; men who have brought Science herself to God’s footstool and made her bend a willing knee to Him who gave her at once her implements and her subjects. They pass to the grave, one by one; scarce one or two of the

giants of Cambridge philosophy lingering still in the loved precincts where first they fearlessly studied, and afterwards as fearlessly illustrated, the wonderful works of God. They pass to their rest, clamoured down already by new strifes of tongues, yet safe themselves in God's tabernacle, and bequeathing the reality of their work to others. Happy they on whom the mantle shall fall—the mantle of their 'readiness' and of their devotion!

We know well enough that such men must be rare. 'Every man hath his proper gift of God—one after this manner, another after that.' There is no honest toil which is not a part of God's preparation. Literature, as well as science, can equip for God's conflict. It is ignorance, it is undiscipline, it is uneducation,

which makes us flee when none pursueth. A mind practised in study, whatever be its department, is not awed into doubting by the self-assertion of the infidel. It can weigh, and wait, and judge. And not only that. For one man who could be made with any culture an effective champion, in speech or writing, of revelation, a thousand are capable of being shod with that Gospel readiness of which the text makes mention. Brethren, it might make Angels weep to see the waste here too often made of priceless gifts ; gifts such as God gives, in these Universities, to England, and to no other nation on the face of His earth. You have before you, every one, a lifetime short at the longest, and then an eternity unmeasured by millenniums. As you prepare, so will you live ; as you live, so will

you die. Fearful the spectacle of young lives risking, chancing, gambling away themselves! daring to undertake the charge of other lives, whether as masters, landowners, legislators, or ministers; daring to face trouble, doubt, difficulty, temptation; daring to settle their faith and to shape their destiny, without preparation long and anxious for responsibilities so tremendous! Listen, brethren, listen to-day to St Paul's counsel. Put on the sandal of readiness—not in the form (for of that there is too much) of presumption and positiveness, of prejudice and self-conceit, of swiftness to speak and incapability of doubting—but of that preparedness, for life and for death, which is only, which is surely, to be found in what the text calls 'the Gospel of peace;' that Gospel

which Christ brought from heaven, stamped with God's fourfold seal, of holiness, wisdom, power, and love, and then committed to the safe keeping of a Church for which He shed His blood ; that Gospel which is the peace of God, knitting all the scattered fragments of mind and will and soul into one, and bringing all into harmony with that mind and will and spirit above which is the Love and the Life and the Light of men ! Let not one day pass without trying the truth of that Gospel in earnest, resolute, importunate prayer. Ask God to lift up His light upon you, and convince you of the being and the power, of the atoning death and the risen life, of Jesus. Ask Him so to reveal His Son in you, that it shall be no guess and no peradventure that He is your Lord and your

God. Pray Him to keep you stedfast in this faith, and every day to frame and fashion your whole life, in thought and speech and act, after it. Ask of Him grace to try the strength of the Gospel, here and now, by facing your besetting sin in the name and by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Fight it out with the devil in some definite decisive battle within, after which you shall be able to say, 'I know in whom I have believed;' 'He is faithful that promised;' 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!' One such experience—is it not to this that St Paul here challenges us?—one such experience is more to the soul that has it than all the books of all the theologians. The habit of such experiences grows at last into an evidence sure and stedfast, strong enough to form a practical

answer to all who would say to you, The Gospel is a fable, Christ is not risen, prayer is a mockery, and God is an abstraction and a name. You answer, Whether He be a name or no, I know not ; one thing I know, that, whereas I was tied and bound by the chain of my sins, now I am free and at large and victorious, so long, and only so long, as I live in communion with a Father and Saviour and Comforter, whom I treat as living and hearing and answering, as tender to compassionate, and as strong to save. If it be so—if it be indeed so—that good and evil, falsehood and holiness, are in league for my ruin ; that through a faith which is a delusion I reach a strength which is virtue ; that by means of prayer which is idle as the wind I find myself able to become pure and

peaceable and diligent and self-forgetting—if all this be so, then out of this wreck and discord of my being I can but choose the less of two evils, live the better life even in error, and bow myself to the inevitable conditions of a creature the accident of an accident. But if this cannot be—if good and evil cannot thus conspire—if the lie cannot be holy, if the wicked thing cannot be true, then is my evidence sure and my hope steadfast. If the Gospel of peace gives me the victory, then by that sign I know the Author—God is with it and in it of a truth.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,

October 20, 1872.

II.

PRAYER.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.—DANIEL vi. 10.

AND was this superstition? Was this the lingering bigotry of an obsolete Judaism, surviving the transplantation into a land of larger culture and higher civilization? This man of kings' courts and great employments, chief minister of successive dynasties, in whom Eastern astrologers recognized a 'light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods,' was he showing himself a silly

fanatic when he thus braved the wrath of his royal master by disobeying the edict which prohibited worship? Shall one who admires the courage ridicule the enthusiasm? Shall we praise the conscientiousness which faced martyrdom at the call of fancied duty, and condemn the infatuation which saw a duty in devotion?

★ Brethren! these are questions asked openly in the world, in the Church, of this day; and they are questions which unsettle, where they overthrow not, the faith of many; and they are questions which cannot, like most questions, wait for their answer, inasmuch as they are fundamental, crucial, vital, touching the very spring of being, and coming (so to say) between the man and his God.


We shrink, and perhaps ought to shrink, from a topic so momentous ; feeling how much the comfort and well-being of souls may be jeopardised by its wrong or unskilful handling. We have thought to turn aside from it into provinces less perilous and less responsible. But everything seems to beckon us this way, and to make every other subject insignificant by comparison. Pray then, we and you, that we may touch it, however feebly, however partially, at least with reverence and with sympathy ; guided by the God 'who heareth prayer' to that which shall quicken and not hinder the prayers of His people.

There might seem indeed to be an impropriety, almost an indelicacy, in dealing in any manner with this most intimate, most secret in-

tercourse between God and the soul. Praying is the object of preaching: but can it be its subject? Most of all, in the form of an enquiry into the reality, the lawfulness, the possibility, of praying? A deep awe should indeed rest in all such questionings, upon the ear that hears and the tongue that speaks. Far, far from this meditation be the lightness and the smartness and the asperity of worldly controversialists, of the strife of wrangling tongues! Put off the shoe from the foot, thou who wouldest discuss the mystery of mysteries, man's access to and converse with his Maker! 'Is it nothing to you, O ye that pass by,' if all the generations of God's Church, from the Creation to the Advent, shall have lived and died on a faith which was delusion? Here at least, inside the Church, with memories

dear and sacred of lives and deaths, near and far off, of which prayer was the soul ; with an ancestry, more than of family, knitting us to saints and heroes of whom the world was not worthy ; we need not fear levity or coldness or indifference in the listening. That which we could not bear to discuss with persons uninterested, we will ponder together here on the knees of the soul.

It is wonderful how full Scripture is, when we read it in this aspect, of the word and of the fact of Prayer. This one day, how full is everything of it ! And what wonder ? The very life of religion is prayer. Unlike in all else, all God's saints have been men of prayer. It has been their life. Explain it as you may, here is a fact of which philosophy, of which candour,




of which common sense, of which common justice must take notice. Here is a phenomenon as plain, as certain, as striking, as sunrising or sunset. The antiquity of prayer—its existence, as a habit, as a custom, in the remotest age of which we have one record ; the universality of prayer, as a primary duty of every man who has imagined himself to have so much as one spark or one echo of a revelation ; the importance attached to prayer, in the mind and in the life of all religious men ; the prevalence of prayer, in proportion to the emergency of circumstance and the vehemence of feeling, in the best and noblest and truest of men ; the power of prayer, judged but by its results in moulding character and affecting action and even transforming life ; the benefit of prayer, its enemies themselves

being judges, in calming, softening, sobering, sweetening, strengthening, elevating the spirits and souls of the righteous ; these are all so many facts, which the unbeliever himself cannot gainsay, though he may profess to account for them on principles most unsatisfactory to the Christian.

Remember also that this antiquity and universality of prayer in God's Church has been realized in the midst of many conflicting influences which might have been expected to overcome it. Prayer, if in one sense an instinct, is in another aspect a mystery. That I should be able, kneeling on this paltry insignificant earth, to hold communication with 'the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity ;' to think my thought, to confess my sin, to wish my wish,

into the ear of an Almighty listening God ; to bring my little, fleeting, dying life into the presence, into the regard, into the loving fostering supervision of Him who made earth and sea and sky, and in whom, moment by moment, 'all things consist ;' this surely is a conception so little obvious or a thing of course that it must have needed more than argument, more than persuasion, much, very much more than accident, to recommend it so convincingly to the judgment and heart of mankind. And when to this mysteriousness we add the difficulty, felt and acknowledged by all who have tried it, of the work of praying ; the reluctance of the natural fallen being to seek the face of God ; the resistance of flesh and blood, much more of sin and conscious unworthiness, to the



effort of arising in the far country to return home to One justly displeased ; the exertion required, alike of intellect and affection and will, on each particular occasion of earnest importunate supplication ; we may well marvel more and more at the moral force which has vanquished this difficulty, and made prayer not only the rule of every religion, but the practice of all the religious. One thing more we must add, if we would be true to human experience : and that is, the many discouragements and disappointments of praying ; the oft-repeated long-frustrated endeavour after a grace seen but in the distance ; the patient importunate seeking, the late, the tardy, the partial, the imperfect attainment. When the sum of these impediments is taken, and we see

nevertheless that prayer is, and is mighty, and is in all the earth ; then we can appreciate, in some measure, the cogency of the evidence, and feel that it needs more than assertion, and more than conjecture, and more than theory, to destroy it.


And yet, my brethren, prayer would be undermined in one moment, if that which some have dared to say of it were substantiated. If it were a sufficient account of this phenomenon, to say with the unbeliever, that the power of prayer begins and ends with faith in itself ; that all its beneficial effects, which the infidel does not gainsay, are reducible to the influence of the act of praying upon the mind of the worshipper ; that it is not that any answer comes, but that the asking reacts usefully upon

the spirit of the asker ; that it tends to promote calmness and patience and fortitude and benevolence, to suppose oneself communicating with the Invisible God and Lord of life ; that a man who imagines himself heard is solemnized and tranquillized and comforted, enabled to go about his work and to meet his trials with a gentler, braver, kindlier disposition ; and that thus prayer is its own answer, and the common idea of an Auditor above as good as the impossible reality—this would be indeed to cut up by the roots the whole habit and the whole conception. No true man will any longer pray, if you once convince him that prayer is an imposture however beneficial, a fraud however pious. We shall say, ‘A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit,’


nor can the lie be tolerated because it is convenient.

Therefore it becomes a matter of life and death to us to know the truth in this matter. 'Give light, and let us die.' If God has not given us the right to pray ; if God has not made prayer the soul's breath, nor access to Himself the prerogative of a spirit which He has created ; tell us not that, though a fancy, though an illusion, it is productive of good, and that, if it does us good, if it refreshes us, if it amuses us, we are at liberty to practise it while we can. As in the affairs of earth, so surely, not least in the concerns of the soul, our maxim must be, first, midst, and last, Be true, be true, be true !

We can suppose that few of these hearts have been always free from all misgiving as



to the use, the right, and the efficacy of Prayer. Times of depression, 'cloudy and dark days' Ezekiel calls them, come to all of us, when truths most surely believed seem to crack and give way under us. We have hinted at some of the causes which may thus operate upon our faith in Prayer. When the weight of earth and flesh and time lies heavy upon us; when all around conspires to say to us, the things alike and the persons which make up our life, Nothing is real but the visible, and nothing is important but the material; when each separate limb of the soul is so clogged and weighted, that it cannot drag itself, save by a compulsion which makes the act nugatory, to the arduous task of communing with One whom eye hath not seen, dwelling



in the light unapproachable ; when some particular chain of sin is tying and binding us, and we know, in the heart and in the soul, that that sin must be laid down at the very porch of heaven's temple, if we would not preclude our own entrance and affront the majesty which is our hope ; at such times a thousand voices clamour within us, each eloquent with some new argument against the good of praying, each bidding us turn some other way in quest of that benefit, in mind, or body, or estate, for which Scripture and the Church and pious custom had encouraged us to make application at the throne of grace.

At these moments, my brethren—and I think we must have known them—there is

scarce one cavil or taunt of the unbeliever which has not awakened an echo in the most earnest and faithful heart.

Sometimes it is the presumption—the impertinence, I had almost said—of praying, which forces itself upon the attention. Can I really suppose that the great First Cause, the Universal Fountain of being, can have leisure to attend to this want or pain or unrest, which I myself, who would have it relieved, yet feel in my own consciousness to be less than nothing to any one out of myself? Is it not great ignorance of my place and my desert, as a very insignificant inmate, for a very short life-time, of a very insignificant planet, to suppose, or to act as if I thought, that my happiness or my misery could be of any consequence at all to

the Almighty One who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy? It is not always self-evident, though it is a deep and substantial principle, that all such hesitation is in fact the imputation to God Himself of an estimate of importance and insignificance which belongs altogether to finite intelligences. When we thus speak, however humbly and reverently, of things great and small in God's regard; of things too trifling, and of other things not too trifling, for His notice—even if the one class of subjects be the management of universes, and the other class of subjects be the aches and tears of a child—we are forgetting that it is the attribute of the Infinite and Self-Existent One to measure not with man's measure the relative or the positive; that to God nothing can be

great but Himself; and that, so far from its being beneath His dignity to take account of created interests and sufferings, it is, in reality, the highest glory of Him before whom suns and stars, Angels and Archangels, are in themselves 'less than nothing, and vanity,' that He visits with His consolation the prisoner in his dungeon, the widow and fatherless in their affliction; that He marks the first rising to return of the prodigal exile, and thrills joy through the very heaven of His holiness over one sinner that repenteth.

Sometimes it is from another quiver that the dart of doubt is suggested. You are asking God, so the cavil shapes itself, to 'make a new thing in the earth;' to interrupt, in your behalf, the orderly laws of His working; to do that

which, if often done, would introduce uncertainty and confusion into everything, and replace the 'Fiat lux' of creation by an opposite mandate, 'Let there be darkness.' How can God grant this prayer of yours, for the health (say) or the life of your friend, in disregard of that general connection of cause and effect which exists between a poison and a fever, between exhaustion and death? How can God, in this other case, hearken to the entreaty that it will please Him to counteract the regular operation of His winds and His waves, of His storms and His calms, on purpose that a particular person in whom you happen to feel an interest may be restored in safety to your home and to your embrace? How can God, in this other case, consistently with His moral laws, which are at least as real as the

natural, prevent, at your intercession, some careless boyhood running on into a sensual youth, some sensual youth into a corrupt manhood and a ruined old age, until, as 'lust conceiving brought forth sin,' so 'sin finished shall bring forth death?' Nay, how can God—the thing which even they who doubt about prayers concerning weather and sickness regard as the proper subject for supplication—how can God, for your mere asking, interpose between your own sin of the past, and its just, its natural consequence in the weakness and misery of the present? When you beg of God a pure heart, you yourself having made that heart by your own self-indulgences a very cage of unclean birds; when you beg of God a heavenward spirit, you yourself having cribbed and cabined

that spirit, by your own obstinate indifference, within the four narrow walls of earth and time ; you are, in fact, asking Him to break His mighty self-enforcing law of moral and spiritual consequence, and to encourage, both in yourself and in others, that fatal habit of venture and speculation in the things of the soul, which it must be the first object of religion—of revelation first and foremost, if a revelation there be—to discountenance and to preclude.

These are terrible thoughts so much as to shape into utterance. But they cannot be entirely new to any of us. And although they wear an air of reason, and with many pass for unanswerable, I venture to think that they are as shallow as they are shocking. If by 'law' we mean what (in this connection) we ought to

mean, God's habit of acting, God's way of going on, as observed by us where we can trace it, as made known to us by whatsoever means; it is impossible to speak of any particular supposed act of God as breaking this law, until we know for certain every chapter and every clause of it; know for certain (in other words) that this very act in question was not conceivably a part of it. How if, for example, the prevalence of prayer was one ingredient in that irresistible will? How if God, unto whom 'all His works are known (we read) from the beginning,' was pleased to link together in the eternal counsels the prayer which should ask, and the result which should be realized? How if prayer itself be a part of the predestination—that predestination which (we grant) none can withstand and

none can modify? Something of this kind seems to lurk in those memorable words of God by Ezekiel, 'I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. . . . I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' The promise is ready, but the prayer must fetch it.


And is there indeed any immorality, any breach of God's law spiritual, in the granting of those other prayers spoken of? prayers for the reformation of a life, mine own or another's; prayers for the cleansing of a sin-stained heart, for the elevation of an earth-bound spirit? Oh, if there be anything immoral in Prayer, in the name of God abandon it! But if the highest of all morality be that which gives back a soul to its God; which uncoils the binding rope

of habit, and makes a whole man free with the liberty which is in Christ Jesus ; tell us not that we are risking God's law by bidding you to believe in a superhuman work of healing, or that we are encouraging in others a gambling with the spiritual life by relying with all our trust upon a God mighty to bring us sinners to repentance. Who ever in the history of this race was made profligate by the hope of a late, a bitter repentance ? Who ever found the efficacy of prayer so sudden or so luxurious, as to embolden him to relax, in the confidence of it, one struggle, or one battle, or one agony, of the self-mastering and the self-amendment ?

There remain behind, unnoticed, for lack of space and time, a thousand possible misgivings as to the availableness of Prayer. We cannot

count that old doctrine a conceit which tells us of an enemy trembling for his dominion often as he sees one of us kneeling, like Daniel, to make supplication. Sometimes the mere panic is enough—Prayer is an enthusiasm. What if it be? And what if ‘enthusiasm’ itself means the having God in us? Sometimes prayer is a nullity. Thou kneelest here, in thy study or in thy chamber—thou kneelest and utterest words thin as air, pleasing if they be wishes, amiable, pious, hopeful, if they be aspirations—but the great God is not here—He is in a far-off heaven—the blue vault of sky, the white-washed ceiling of thy room, bounds, confines, and flings back thy supplication! Sometimes prayer is a superfluity. God has decided this or that concerning thee; perhaps kindly, perhaps in anger: it is

settled : why meddle with thy destiny ? Sometimes prayer is a mistrust. God has charge of thee : dost thou doubt Him ? Will He not do better for thee than thou canst direct Him ? Hath He not said, 'Stand still, and see my salvation ?' Sometimes, sometimes—said I not always ? prayer is a trouble. It is so long ere I can set in motion the wheels of this chariot—so many wandering thoughts first, so many plans intervening of business and recreation, so many fears and doubts assailing, Who am I ? and what and where is my God ? so many 'bitter thoughts, of conscience born,' telling of prayers defeated by sin, telling of prayers paralyzed by sin, telling of prayers vitiated by sin—O weary, weary, weary round of words, trodden each day, no day advancing me to—



wards my goal, nay, not even if that goal be but the facility, the delight of praying! 'Ye said also, What a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts.'

Brethren! we would draw you back, God helping us, towards this thing which is indeed your life. We tremble lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, as concerning this duty—yes, let us use the old word till we can feel it, this privilege, this blessing—of Prayer. There can be no life toward God without it. Brethren, there can, we believe, be no death toward God with it. Very various are the workings of life: death has none. Expressions, experiences, ideas, doctrines, estimates of good and true and important, these differ, unspeakably differ, in good men, Chris-

tian men, 'saints of the Most High' (to use this Prophet's word for them), who nevertheless all, in their measure, 'shall possess,' do possess, 'the kingdom.' We do not think that they differ much in one thing: all pray. If we would be of them, if we would live good lives, lives above chance and change, above accident and circumstance, above disappointment and defeat and bereavement, above temper and temperament and temptation, we must pray. And, shall I dare to confess it? I care little how you pray, or for what you pray. 'Whereto ye have attained, by it walk,' by it pray, according to your light and according to your conscience. 'If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.' If you have too much limited the field of

prayer, if you have not yet felt the compass of God's permission to enquire of Him, if either scoffing words or misgiving thoughts have kept you from the comfort and strength of consulting God and invoking God and importuning God about everything; be not dismayed—pray as you can, pray as you feel and know and are minded, and God, in His boundless love and pity, will tell you more and more, little by little, of the fathomless depths of His sympathy and of His strength.

It is sometimes the art of the sceptic to dwarf down Prayer to Petition. Prayer, he assumes, is asking certain definite gifts from One whose favour is valued because His power is infinite. It is further assumed that the gifts asked are of this life—health and prosperity,

recovery and restoration, length of days and abundance of possessions ; these are the subjects, the only appreciable subjects, of that Petition which is Prayer. Prove then, he says, in the most precise, literal, business-like manner, whether Prayer is of use. Ask the lives of one room-full of fever-stricken people, and ask not the lives of the rest. If you decline the ordeal, you are self-condemned. If you believed in the power of Prayer, you would 'give the sign.' Even thus was it in the days of Jesus Christ. Very hard it might seem to those Pharisees, very unsympathizing, or else very suspicious, that He would not display in the sky the token which would have wrought conviction. 'The kingdom of God,' He said, 'cometh not with observation.' 'The kingdom of God is within

you : ' if you will not see it there, you can see it nowhere. Even so, we all feel the impropriety, the inconclusiveness, whether meant or not the irreverence, of the proposed test of Prayer. Prayer is not the synonym of Petition. Petition itself is not chiefly of earth. Prayer is speaking to God—whatsoever be the voice, the language, the subject of discourse : it may be confession, it may be adoration, it may be thanksgiving, it may be petition. If it be petition, it may be entreaty, it may be deprecation, it may be intercession, it may be for the life, it may be for the soul. Who pretended that a sudden, disjointed, isolated request, uttered once in a way, apart from the spirit, apart from the life's tone and tenor and habit, had any promise, any faintest hint

of an answer? Prayer is the soul's language in the ear of a God known to be present. A man may pray, who asks nothing, who but dwells in the secret place of the Most High, silent from petition, counting it enough to abide under the shadow of the Almighty, the All-loving. Enlarge your conception of this thing. Know that you can pray, even if you have a scruple about prayer for temporal blessings; even if you see not your way to prayer for wind and rain, for staying the course of a fever, or diverting the incidence of a thunderbolt. Call no man an unbeliever who does not expect and dare not implore special interpositions of a Hand which he knows to be working and can trust to work well. He misses something perhaps of the consolation

of the 'Christian altogether;' and yet his soul may be resting on the impregnable rock, and his life guarded, half unawares, by ministering spirits from God's presence. The reality of prayer is the meeting of the two spirits—the 'I' and the 'I AM'—unto communication, unto converse, unto interchange (with reverence be it spoken) of thought and speech, of life and love. Where this is, prayer is; though nothing be asked and nothing be given, save that ineffable grace of the Divine Presence, from which the earthly countenance shines, and men take knowledge of the man that he has been with Jesus. Then, in due season, then, in God's time, the transference will be easy and natural from the walking with God here to the seeing His face hereafter.

Brethren, it cannot be wicked to pray. It is no intruding into things forbidden. It is the visiting a home which was ours in our infancy, which shall be ours for ever when the childhood of our perfection shall at last be attained. Prayer is going home. Prayer is coming to Him who is our Rest. Prayer is awakening out of earth's sleep, letting in the light of day upon night's dark dank chamber, and beginning to live. Use it evermore as your refreshment and your recreation. 'Bodily exercise,' this day's Lesson tells us, 'profiteth little:' the life toward God, of which Prayer is the intensest, most vital moment, 'is profitable for all things.' See that you make it so. Make it tell upon the life that now is. Prove it now herewith—not by its power to work wonders, to make sick men

suddenly whole, or 'a plague of rain and waters' a firmament swept and sparkling—but by its effect upon your life's life ; by its chasing the demon of lust and the demon of cruelty and the demon of a diabolical selfishness, and making you the helper of the weak, and the comforter of the downcast, and the example of the wavering, and the delight of your friends, and the joy of your home. When you find that Prayer does something of this kind for you ; that it will not dwell with sin, that it makes you strong for the soul's battle, that it is in you a reality and a power and a love ; then you, and others with you, will have a proof not to be gainsaid, a proof worth ten thousand portents, whose gift is Prayer ; you will know that such a boon, so pure, so peaceable, so beneficent, can have but

one source, one origin ; is indeed from above ;
cometh down, like wisdom, like hope, like
charity, from the Father of lights, with whom
is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,

October 27, 1872.

III.

ILLUMINATION.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

EPHESIANS i. 18.

IT is the prayer of St Paul for his beloved Church of Ephesus. For persons, of whose Churchmanship, of whose Christ-membership, he has no doubt. Already called, believing, sealed with the Spirit. St Paul hears of their faith, hears of their love, ceases not to give thanks for them as he mentions them in his prayers—those wonderful, heaven-searching, earth-compassing prayers, which neither distance, nor isolation, nor imprisonment, nor (hardest to bear) compulsory inactivity, nor

presence, by day and night, of a rude heathen soldier chained to him, could interrupt or embitter: and yet, when he tells us what those prayers were for these Ephesians, we might almost think, in our haste and in our formal rigid theology, that they were such as implied, not their immaturity only, but their shallowness and hollowness, in the life of Christ: for he prays that God may give them, as a blessing still needed, 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened.'

There lies thus on the surface of the text a lesson of humility and a lesson of wisdom. Let us never count ourselves to have attained. Let us never think it too late to pray for illumination. Let us never resent, never repudiate the

word which speaks to us as unto babes (still) in Christ. And for others—so many of us as are or shall be ministers of Christ—let us learn, in our preaching, in our counselling, in the tone of our address, in the manner of our shepherding, that spirit of hope and of brotherhood, that sense of the universal propitiation and of the individual incorporation, which shall make the very sound of our Gospel an encouragement and an attraction, saying this to the most backward and the most earth-bound in the congregation, Because ye are Christ's, therefore be Christians : because ye are chosen and called and sealed, therefore pray, therefore struggle, therefore hope : because ye are children of light, therefore walk in it, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.

There can, I believe, be no question that the proper reading of the text will give us 'heart' for 'understanding.' 'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.' The peculiarity of the expression seems to have occasioned the alteration. And yet what a word is it, when it is restored to us! How beautiful, how suggestive, how bright in thought! 'The eyes of your heart illuminated,' to know two things: the first, 'the hope of God's calling;' in other words—for the 'and' which makes three co-ordinate clauses, ought, I believe, to be cancelled—'the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints;' the second, the exceeding greatness of the power put forth upon us who believe, a power measured only by that which raised Christ Himself from death, and

exalted Him both to universal dominion and to the headship over all things to the Church.

‘The eyes of your heart being enlightened.’

It would be a mistake to carry into the Bible that nicety of mental distribution which is sometimes deceptive even in human metaphysics. We are aware that ‘heart’ in the language of the Bible is larger and more inclusive than in our modern acceptation. It means sometimes in Scripture all that is in man. ‘From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts,’ as well of blasphemy and foolishness, as of passion and lasciviousness. Still that there is a difference, usually recognized in the Bible, between ‘heart’ and ‘understanding,’ will be evident in a moment if you try in some particular instance to interchange the two. ‘With

my whole heart have I sought Thee.' 'I cried with my whole heart.' 'In the integrity of my heart have I done this.' 'Give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart.' 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.' 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'

'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.'

The heart, brethren, no less than the understanding, has its thoughts, has its voice, has its hands, has its eyes. What is this but to say that the one indivisible being, the 'myself' of the man, has a real, an active, an energetic existence—and that in all manner of ways—in the province of the affections? The point before us

—and we will keep to it—is, the discernment, the insight, the intuition, of the affections. The heart has eyes. The eyes of the heart are as keen, are as piercing, are as quick and as far-sighted, in their sphere—and that sphere is a universe—as the eyes of the body or the eyes of the intellect. Who has not found them so? I dare almost to say that without the heart the intellect itself is torpid; that without loving there is no knowing anywhere.

Certainly it is so in study. What can be so dull, so lethargic, so stupid, as mere quickness, sharpness, cleverness, hating its subject? I need not carry back your thoughts to those first days of lessons, in nursery or school-room, when all was blank despairing darkness because the love of knowledge was not yet awakened, either in its

pure disinterestedness, which is the promise of wisdom, or in that ambition of reward, which sometimes helps and sometimes counterfeits it. The experience is yours still. There are subjects of lecture and of examination, which you dislike and therefore fail in : there are others which the same mind readily grasps and rapidly appropriates, because it finds in them a congeniality and an attractiveness, so that the eyes of the understanding are for them the eyes also of the heart. If you would know a science, you must love it. If you would know a book, you must read it with the eyes of the heart. Dislike it all the time, and you will never know it. Love is knowledge.

And who has not had experience, in life, of this phenomenon—a head entirely educated by

the heart? There was one who, in boyhood, in youth, through school days and academical, was looked upon as a laggard and a dullard in everything intellectual; below and behind his equals in age, in all that distinguishes youth or gives promise for the manhood. But there came to that man, under the good hand of God, the impulse of a new, a mighty affection—perhaps in the form of a human love, perhaps of a Divine—and soon the whole being seemed to be lifted to a higher level, into a livelier and more buoyant atmosphere. Activity, success, usefulness, distinction, the respect of the world, the devotion of his own, the blessing of the needy, the visible approval of One above, began to mark his onward way, and a life, not of meritorious toil only, but (which is our present

point) of real intellectual elevation, of opinion wise and large, of judgment profound and persuasive, was the result here below, the direct, the undoubted result, not of the expulsive, but rather of the impulsive power of a new affection.


If this be true of the knowledge of things, what shall we say of that of persons? There certainly the eye of knowledge must be the eye of love. Tell us not of people quick-sighted to the faults of their brother; of men said to be discerning because they are suspicious, good judges of character because with them every character is bad. That is a devil's knowledge, from which God keep us all! Doubtless every character has its bad side. The amiable are sometimes weak, and the strong are sometimes — thank God, not always — unamiable.

The religious are sometimes censorious, and charity is sometimes seen—thank God, not always—in divorce from orthodoxy. I doubt not that evil spirits see these inconsistencies—see perhaps little else in us—and make sport of them. But he who would see another truly, see him through and through, must see him, in his measure, as God sees him—with the eyes of the heart, which are the eyes of love. How often has it happened to you to judge a man unfavourably. You could see nothing but his awkwardness, or his roughness, or his ugliness, or his unmannerliness. Yet a friend of yours loved that man—wished that you judged him favourably—told you that he was to be loved. Could you but have got over your prejudice, could you but have willed to like him, you

would have valued him, because then first you would have known him, too. The eyes of the understanding are nothing without the eyes of the heart.

Judge ye therefore, brethren, how little the intellect can furnish towards the knowledge of God. We would not undervalue—God forbid—Theology, the key and the crown and the queen of sciences. We cannot echo that senseless nineteenth-century cry, which would make light of Theology, pretending to exalt piety ; which would say, We all know : any one can preach : why study the Fathers ? why institute a Theological School or a Theological Tripos ? theology, if it means anything, means religion, and religion, if it is not an imposture, means piety, and piety means feeling, and feeling means

sentiment, and sentiment is a mere incense, a fragrant dust, aromatic and fugitive and evanescent ! Nevertheless we do know that a man might be a theologian and not a Christian. Why ? Because the eyes of the intellect are diverse and separate from the eyes of the heart, and he who would know God can know Him only with these. God, as the Hope of our calling ; God, as the Inheritance of the saints ; God, as the Resurrection Power, first to Christ, then to the Christian—of course no Theology taught in Lecture-rooms or tested by Examinations will bring us to Him, will make us know Him ! One moment of prayer is worth them all—because Prayer is the voice of the heart, and the heart alone can become acquainted with a Person. That knowledge be-



gins and grows and is perfected in converse, in contact, in intercourse and interchange, in sympathy and fellowship and communion ; not least when Hope and Power are the two subjects of the study—the hope of an everlasting coexistence, the power of an assimilating Presence. ‘If any man love God, the same’ knoweth—let me rather say with St Paul—it is more reverent, it is more true—‘the same is known of Him.’ ‘The eyes of your heart being enlightened.’

There is a second condition of seeing. The organ of sight is created, and yet there is not vision. Light is wanting. St Paul prays that the eyes of the heart may be enlightened.

There must be, first, a revelation of the Invisible. The light unapproachable must itself approach.

Who amongst us believes in Revelation? I know we reverence the name and the idea. The ancient Book which enshrines it is dear still to the heart of England. Yet suffer, brethren, and put not from you, the word of enquiry. Do you believe that God, over and above the book of Nature, in which he that runs may read what St Paul calls 'His eternal power and Godlikeness'—over and above the gifts of reason and conscience, by which discoveries may be made, true discoveries, of the wonder-working Hand, and the right-loving Will, of a Power, a Person, who evidently lets us not alone—has interposed to communicate, directly, thoughts, and facts, and 'concerning' directions, as to Himself, and as to His creatures? Do you believe in a Revela-


tion, real, direct, and original, of which God, God in Christ, is at once the Subject and the Author?

This is an enquiry lying deeper and reaching further than the genuineness or the authenticity of any number, or of the whole volume, of the Books of Scripture. Revelation and Inspiration are two things, not one. It is great confusion, and it is a great wrong, to interchange them. It is quite conceivable that there might have been one of the two, and not the other; that God might have revealed Himself in Prophets and in His Son, and yet not have inspired one word of the record. 'The Light that lighteth every man, coming into the world,' might have shone in all its lustre—and yet the other and separate light, of a Word written and legible,

never have been kindled. We do a cruel wrong to others, we lay a needless and wanton burden upon ourselves, when we make faith in Revelation, and faith in Inspiration, convertible and interchangeable terms. A man might be a devout believer in the Gospel of grace and salvation, and yet not an implicit receiver of each verse or each chapter or each book of Scripture as equally, and as a matter of course, directly inspired by God. Let the two questions be kept distinct, and God will answer each, in His time and in His way, to the devout and earnest and honest enquirer.

But the former of the two questions is vital—Hath God revealed Himself to us in His Son? I do not ask, Was the character of Christ beautiful, and the doctrine of Christ sublime,

and the life of Christ exemplary, and the death of Christ noble and martyr-like and self-sacrificing? None of these things would prove a difference in kind, however great in degree, between Him and some few of those master-spirits which have appeared at intervals of a few generations or a few centuries to astonish and to abash and to elevate mankind. What we ask is, 'Was God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself?' Had Christ words of eternal life, brought with Him from heaven, for fallen, sinful, dying, immortal men? This is a question which will not wait. It is your life. Theories of Inspiration, particular things in the Bible, Authorship of its books, Old Testament miracles, I dare to call each and all of these secondary to that of the commission and the



authority and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. When you are a Christian, then you will have a thousand questions to ask—interesting, important, momentous questions, for which a lifetime is not long enough; but you will ask them of a God known in a Saviour—you will ask them on your knees before a Person in whose light alone you hope to see light.

But there is not in all of us this first knowledge. St Paul's prayer in the text is wanted here, in a sense in which it was not wanted at Ephesus. Brethren, we must not assume even our Christianity. We must not take for granted this first illumination. The eyes of the heart still need to be enlightened in thousands and tens of thousands inside the Church. We still—in Isaiah's strong figure—grope at noonday in

darkness, like men that have no eyes. The experience of one—taken almost at hazard from a beautiful biography of yesterday—is the experience of multitudes of listeners in these galleries.

‘I have always felt that there was a something between me and God ; that there was a barrier I had no power over, which seemed to stop as it were my communication with Him, to hide Him from me. When I attempted to pray, it was often with a feeling, Where shall I find Him? a sort of vagueness about the whole thought of Him. I am aware now that I did not believe in the reality of any deeper feeling. . . . Now, it is but faint, yet I have a feeling within—it is not a thought, a belief, but a feeling. . . . I look to myself

so ugly in the past, that I wonder any one could love me. . . . When I read in my Bible, every word seems as if it applied to me personally; words that were before an empty sound, seem to pierce through me. All my previous religious impressions seem to have left the root of the matter untouched; now I am sure that I am being drawn to God, and that He will lift me up to rest wholly on His promises and to taste His peace. . . . I feel quite fearful lest the delicacy of the new feeling should be hurt or damped. It is certainly very mysterious. I feel a constant wonder at myself at what I am sure is no delusion, and yet is so distinct from any previous impression. It is not a difference in degree—it is an awakening to life; a removing of what before seemed

to be between me and God, as if He was hid from my eyes.'

'The eyes of your heart being enlightened.' My brethren! every man hath his proper gift of God, and even His spiritual dealing is infinitely various. It is idle, it is worse than idle, to try to force all men through a round of successive experiences, each having its defined form, its assigned chapter in the manual of the soul's pilgrimage. It may be the will of God that some of His spirits should dwell in a lower heaven of faith; should never in this life see Him with this clear, this distinct intuition; should have all their joy, if not all their peace, reserved for the year and the day and the hour of the beatific vision. These things may be—may be as a trial of faith, may

be for other reasons, or may be as a discipline of loving correction for long foregoing years of indifference, frivolity, or sin. They who dwell much in the secret place of the Most High, serving with veiled face and feet, 'longing, yea, even fainting' for a brighter light and a more open vision, may well accept it as a cross to be borne if they must still cry, with the patriarch, 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: but He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

Only, only, brethren—we would charge it upon you in the name alike of truth and hope—suffer not any sophistry, not even if it call itself by a theological name, to persuade you that you are in the light when you know that you are in darkness. Some of God's saints have walked all their days in the dimness of a twilight hope and a flickering peradventure. But they felt it at the heart's core, and they made it a discipline of humility unto godliness. How different had it been with them, if they had declared that they were in the light, that they had all, that all which they had not was either a fancy or an impossibility, because they had been baptized, and because Church usage made *φωτισμὸς* a synonym for baptism! Yet even Church fathers, when they wrote guardedly,

could distinguish between the two ; could show that they knew the difference between the type and the antitype ; could say, ' Mark, the illumination is before the baptism ;' and, ' Without the illumination of the Spirit no man can attain to the knowledge of the truth.' Phrases and figures, half devotional, half rhetorical, harmless in days when Christianity was suffering, may become dangerous to truth, because dangerous to spirituality, when they are stereotyped, in an age or a world of promiscuous profession, into formulas of doctrine or definitions of Theology. Let us accept with devout thanksgiving the place within God's Church, within Christ's body, to which baptism has admitted us. Let us acknowledge the greatness of that mercy which has ' prevented ' us with benediction ; which has

sealed upon the individual the world-wide redemption, and given us to draw the first breath of consciousness in an atmosphere of Evangelical grace. 'Thy congregation shall dwell therein;' in the dew and the rain and the sunshine of a love perfectly free and a hope guaranteed by promise. It is everything to know that not one day nor one hour need intervene before we begin to live the life which is hidden with Christ in God. That we need not wait for one sign, inward or outward, that God has taken us for His own and sealed us with His seal. That we are already His people and the sheep of His pasture; entitled to say to Him, 'Our Father;' entitled to plead the will which is our sanctification. These things are ours: let us not 'curse our blessings' by 'dreaming that we

eat' to 'awake with appetite.' Let us read aright the signs within. If we find no pleasure in the Word of God and Prayer; if we know not what it is to speak inside the soul to a living, a present, a listening God; if in the Services of God's House, if in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, we can but galvanize ourselves into a so-called devotion by gestures and postures which never get beyond a violent self-determination to believe that there is some One before us to whom obeisance is due, while yet with that Person, if Person He be, we never enter, spirit to spirit, into real communication, into conscious converse—it is idle to say that the eyes of the heart are enlightened because in sleeping infancy we were sprinkled with the baptismal water, made partakers of Christ, and

inserted into that holy Church which is His body. The blessing of that initiation is great ; but it lies not in making it supplant the very grace itself which it testifies.

Brethren ! if any heart feels itself this day unilluminated, not yet lit up and kindled by that living grace which is the one satisfaction of the true, let it pray for itself St Paul's prayer, let it resolve, let it determine—Redemption, Church-membership, the Book which is God's legible Word, the Sacraments which are God's visible hand, all justify this—the resolution, the determination, to end this unrealized state at once. Not one year, not one month, not one week, not one day, not one hour from this present, shall find or leave me as I am ! I have the right of illumination given

me—I will use it. I will ask, I will seek, I will knock, on the ground of the promise. Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon this heart! Lord, if Thou art—and I know that Thou art; if Thou hearest prayer—and I know that Thou hearest; I will come to Thee as such, as that which Thou art, and I will not leave Thee, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me! O long, long before this opening Term has closed again—long before these dark, cloudy, watery days of November have changed themselves into the healthier frosts of Christmas—you shall have been heard, and you shall have been answered; the eyes of your heart enlightened with the spiritual Presence, and you yourself made anew into the resolute, the humble, the often rejoicing, always hoping

Christian! Yes, we exaggerate to ourselves the length of time and the outlay of toil—yet could either be too great with such an object? required to gain a hearing at the Throne of Grace. *An* answer there will be, I dare to say it, instantly. An answer, a light, a peace, a hope, yes, a joy, so soon as there is what God calls an asking. We limit, God limits not. God never says, ‘Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give.’ If any of you lack wisdom, if any of you lack light, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. Only let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

‘The eyes of your heart being enlightened.’

The duty is again this year laid upon me,

and I accept it with thankfulness, of urging upon this great Congregation the claims of a Charity, one than which none can lie nearer to your doors—a few moments, I trust, will suffice to recommend it also to your hearts. This University, itself in so many senses a focus of light—light intellectual, light, I know, also—light increasingly—moral, religious, spiritual—dwells, like the Church in the world, in the midst of darkness. It is needless to assign causes; but I suppose that no darkness is much denser than that which hangs, or did hang, upon the suburbs of Cambridge. I say not whether any portion of this cloud of sin and sorrow is drawn from the very midst of us: the fact is not gainsaid—there is a cloud dank and pestilential, receding a little, driven backward by pastoral effort, yet

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existing still—and your aid is asked to transfigure it. Something, much, has been done during these past ten years, since first I was entrusted with this office—something, much, by the devoted work of men of your own body, who had before them the choice of all work, and chose this, the least attractive and the most disheartening; something, much, has been done, visible to man, how much more to God, to carry a Gospel of light and love into the homes of poverty, into the very nurseries and seedplots of vice, and so to prove once again that that Gospel has in it—might it be heard, might it be heeded—the secret of all light and of all love, between man and man, because first between man and his God.

Yes, brethren, think not that you are urged

to an impossible or a chimerical effort, when you are asked to give for the evangelization of these suburbs. A work is in progress there, due in large part to this Association, which for the Gospel's sake, which for Christ's sake, ought to be spoken of. In a district, once (I had almost said) infamous, numbering now 11,000 inhabitants, there are already three Churches, containing more than 2000 worshippers on the evening of each Sunday, there are more than 400 communicants, 1600 children in Church Sunday Schools, more than 100 Candidates for the annual Confirmation—will you say that the money here gathered is wasted or thrown away when such are its fruits? Is it not worth something—some self-denial, some foregoing of superfluities, some sacrifice of luxury whether in amusement or


entertainment—to be able to touch but with one finger a work so pure, so merciful, so ‘twice blessed’?

This work depends still in large part upon your annual offerings on this one occasion. Brethren, it would move your serious regret, did you know, could you know, how great a discouragement you have sometimes dealt to this holy, this Divine mission, by your indifference, I am sure your mere inattention, to the appeal thus made to you. Most of all, by the uncertainty, the precariousness, the almost capriciousness, of your response. One year this occasion gave a collection of £98: another year of £78: another year of £48. Fifty pounds cut off at one stroke, by a multitude of young, unthinking, unreflecting, not unkind hearts, disregarding,

just 'passing by on the other side,' this urgent case of most real because most secret distress! No doubt we preachers lack the skill oftentimes to touch you. Oh but you should supply, you should not punish, our unadroitness! How can any organization adapt itself to such ebbs and flows of charity? One year you give, and another year you cut off, quite without notice, half the year's stipend—surely not a redundant recompense—of one minister amongst these heathen Christian brothers! I pray you, let this be one of the good days—one of the bountiful givings! I ask of you a hundred pounds to-day. Oh if each one of you would give his least possible offering, such a Congregation could scarcely fall short of the sum of a couple of thousand shillings! I do rely upon your sympathy to-

day. None of you will pass those plates. And think, ere you give, who it is that asks of you. Not man, but Jesus Christ—Christ, in His poor—Christ, in His little ones—Christ, who told you the Parable, the scarce Parable, of the division, and the principle of the division, at the last great day, when the King shall come in His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations. Take that day, that scene, that revelation, into account, and then give what you will—I fear not for the reckoning.

Yet one thing more I would ask of you, while the heart is yet full, and while this remarkable spectacle is still stirring it to its depths. There is one particular suburb of Cambridge, filled with poor, growing daily, cut off from mother Churches on the right hand



and on the left, and destitute absolutely of any permanent house for its worship. It has nothing but a frail temporary tenement; open to every blast of heaven's wind; incapable of holding, itself, one-tenth part of the people. The time has come when that Church must be built: and I am strong in the hope that this day shall lay the first stone of it in the hearts of this audience. I venture to ask a special, a separate effort in this behalf. Take it not from what a larger, a more comprehensive enterprise requires in this day's almsgiving. You are giving here for all the suburbs of this University Town. I ask of you, beyond and beside this, that some five-and-twenty of the best and youngest of my hearers this day will offer themselves as special collectors for a Church

in New Chesterton. I ask of you that in this coming week such a beginning may be made of this work, as shall cheer the hearts of those devoted Christian men who are giving life and all its powers—no common powers of understanding and heart and soul—to the ministry of Christ in that district. Think not that they are idle—or that their poor destitute people are idle—in this behalf, that you may be burdened! More than £80 are gathered in that poor room in one year by the offerings of the people themselves. But they cannot—no, not if they gave their all—they cannot do this one thing—they cannot build. O ye whose hearts are ‘enlightened’ to the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ, who for our sakes became poor—for our sakes left heaven, and bore shame and spitting and scourg-

ing and crucifixion, that we might live with Him here, and afterwards reign with Him in glory—count it not a great thing, as though some strange or some hard thing were asked of you, to build Him one House, for His Name and for His Kingdom, for His worship and for His Sacraments! Rather praise and magnify Him for setting you on His work, for vouchsafing to employ you here, and for promising you His everlasting rest, when, after serving Him in serving your generation, you shall one by one safely and peacefully fall on sleep!

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY,

November 3, 1872.

IV.

THE PERPETUAL PRESENCE.


And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—MATTHEW xxviii. 20.

THIS is the Church's charter. By this instrument we hold our all. If this be true, the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. If Christ, the Crucified and the Risen, is in deed and in truth present still, present for ever, with us who believe, then to be a Christian, a Christian all through and altogether, must be strength and safety and happiness, must be life and glory and immortality, assured by the word of One who cannot lie, of One who, raised from death, dieth no more.

The words themselves are strong, beyond the strength of this Version; beyond the strength indeed, taxed to the uttermost, of our vigorous Saxon tongue. Each word is emphatic. 'Lo.' The 'eyes of the heart' may behold and see the Speaker. 'I'—the pronoun is not (as it might be) implied, but uttered and emphasized, in the Greek. 'I,' whom you once saw daily and companied with in the flesh—'I,' whom you have seen, these last days, come back to you, in identity of person and character, from the grave and gate of death—'am'—not, 'will be,' as though by some new beginning of relationship, transferring into a vague dim future the whole thing spoken of: the present Person, in His present being, He it is that promises. There shall be no breach of

continuity, no disruption or dislocation of the connection that is: 'I am' that which I shall be, and that existence, which is thus without seam or suture, is, for you, a coexistence and a companionship. 'I am—with you.' And that 'alway.' The Greek says, 'all the days;' as though to prepare us for their being many, and to assure us that they are numbered, and to bid us take them one by one, making each a little lifetime, and seeing in this sum of little lifetimes the aggregate of the Church's opportunity and the Church's trial. 'I am with you—all the days—even unto the end of the world'—'the consummation of the age'—the accomplishment of that period which is Time, and so the introduction of that other period which is Eternity.

The words are weighty with thought, and the occasion of their utterance was unique in history. It was a meeting between two worlds; between flesh and spirit; between life and resurrection; between men in the prison-house of sense, and a Man in the emancipation of immortality. It was a meeting by appointment. The province, the district, the spot itself, had been marked out. Galilee, the scene of so many journeyings and so many ministrations—‘a mountain,’ ‘the mountain,’ as though perhaps the very mount of the Beatitudes or the Transfiguration—had been ‘appointed’ by Jesus Himself for this momentous meeting. And now the Eleven, as St Matthew says—with (possibly) a larger company around or behind them, those ‘five hundred brethren’ of whom St Paul speaks



to the Corinthians as having witnessed one of the Appearances—are gathered together, in preparation for that solemn conference of which they know not as yet the subject or the object. He appears. At first perhaps in the distance, on the mountain top, in sudden startling manifestation—as when He entered the chamber at Jerusalem, the doors still shut, and made His first greeting ere they knew Him present. He appears. They see Him: they worship: all worship: and yet—memorable, blessed words—‘some doubted.’ Some—is it not so written?—even of the worshippers! More merciful than our human systems, the Bible recognizes the possibility. A man, a true man, may believe, may behold, may even worship—and yet doubt. What is this but the anxious agonized cry,

‘Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief?’

Yes, if we would be God’s theologians, we must be natural as well as spiritual! We must thread the mazes of that intricate labyrinth, the heart of man, ‘yea, even of the regenerate man,’ and record that which we find—though it contradict rule—for our reproof, for our correction, for our education in righteousness.

They doubt, yet they worship. Doubt, because the sight is wonderful, and the eye is dazzled as it beholds. Doubt, because their all is at stake, and they would not lose it by precipitancy. Doubt, because the joy is overwhelming, and the heart misgives itself, Can it be real?

He then, the merciful Lord, draws near and speaks to them. Such doubting, my brethren,

waits but for converse. Such doubting may survive sight—it will not survive speech. ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.’ More especially is the voice of Christ reassuring, when it sets a man upon work. Fear not, ye who know something of this kind of doubting, which is the mere flutter and trembling of the soul before a truth felt to be vital—fear not to accept Christ’s commission, setting you your life’s work, and authorizing you to do it as for Him. ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth: Go ye,’ in the strength of it, and ye shall make the world mine!

It is not with the details of the Church’s commission that I would occupy your time to-day. And yet every clause is laden with

instruction. There is the basis—the Resurrection Empire of Jesus Christ. He speaks not of the original rights of His Deity, but of the acquired powers of His risen Manhood. ‘We see Jesus . . . for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.’ ‘Wherefore,’ as the reward of humiliation, ‘God also hath highly exalted him.’ Unto me, not as God, but as the Crucified and the Risen, is given all power in heaven and on earth.

On this rock rises the Church. It is to be a Church of movement. Its journeyings are to be coextensive with earth. Missionary, or nothing—such is the alternative. ‘Go ye, and make all the nations disciples.’ He who said aforetime, ‘The field is the world,’ here interprets. Sweep all mankind into the Gospel net. Stay not—for

that time is not yet, and that office is not yours—stay not to discriminate or to judge. ‘Make all the nations disciples.’ The very form of initiation is prescribed. Baptism is the portal. Baptism into the Triune Name. The Name one yet threefold. ‘Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.’ ‘Into the Name’—which is the Revelation of God—so that the life, the soul, the man, shall be concentrated, contained, and enveloped in it. This initiation is not an end, but a beginning. It subjects to teaching. A teaching continuous, thorough, minute, distinctively Christian. A teaching which recognizes Christ as supreme and the doctrine of Christ as authoritative. If ye call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ ye must ‘do the things which I say.’ ‘Teaching them to observe all things,

whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

'I—am with you—alway.'

Try, brethren, struggle, pray, to realize this promise, this pledge, this fact—

The Perpetual Presence.

Surely, surely, we have here more than a farewell—more than the last adieu, however tender or solemn, of a departing friend to his household or his family. Such a parting may have in it many things—reminiscences, anticipations, even promises of an undying remembrance, even promises (it has been so) of a return, in vision or apparition, from the world of the unseen. But this particular expression, 'I am'—or even 'I will be'—'with you alway,'

was never used, I will dare to assert it, in the last conversation between a departing friend and his best-beloved. There is a distinct claim of Divinity, of Deity, in the words. Nothing short of Omnipresence could make this true: and need I say that, where one attribute of God is, there are all attributes? Christ bids them go everywhere, evangelize all nations, busy themselves in all lands, preaching, baptizing, teaching, and this not for a month or a year, but till the end come, till the consummation of time—and in the foreview of this extension and this expansion of the work, He adds, ‘And, lo, I am with you alway.’

We have here, in one clause—and it is never superfluous, least of all in these days, to mark such coincidences—the whole of St John—

Gospel, Epistles, Apocalypse, in one. Men will tell you that St John's Christology (as they call it) was an afterthought ; a later and a morbid growth of Christianity ; the idolatry of a beloved Master, invested, by distance of time and by confusion of idea, with a character which He never assumed, and with a nature which He would have disclaimed as blasphemy. Brethren, we cannot thus dispose of the proper Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you have discarded St John, you find yourself confronted by St Matthew. St Matthew will tell you that, wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. St Matthew will tell you that the Son of Man hath power to forgive sins, and that He gave His life a ransom for many. St Matthew will tell you that among

His latest words, if not the latest, was that promise which takes to Himself Deity—‘Go ye into all the world . . and lo, I am with you everywhere and alway!’ St John himself can say nothing stronger, however he may aid us in developing and in deciphering.

But we should lose a great part of the comfort, and all the distinctiveness, of this saying, if we read it, with some interpreters, as discriminating between the Humanity and the Divinity of Jesus, and promising the presence of the latter in the necessary loss and disappearance of the former. It is by such artifices of dogma that the Church is robbed of her bread. When Christ says ‘I,’ He means Himself and the whole of it. The presence promised is the Emmanuel presence, Divine


and (I had almost said, Divine because) Human. It is quite true that the phrase 'I am with you' implies naturally a Divine presence. It was thus that God spake of old time to Patriarchs and Prophets, summing up all that is sustaining, all that is comforting, all that is elevating, in the one phrase, 'Certainly I will be with thee.' It is thus that the Church concentrates all her best and purest and loftiest wishes for her children gathered under her wing for worship, in the briefest, the most touching of benedictions, 'The Lord be with you.' And the response is like unto it, 'And with thy spirit.'

'I am with you alway.'

Let us ponder together some of the features of this Perpetual Presence. It has evidently

a 'collective and an individual realization. And the Church has ever been in danger, more than in danger, of losing the one of these or the other. An excessive collectivity has pampered her into superstition. An excessive individuality has starved her into infidelity. The one forgets the 'one spirit : ' the other loses sight of the 'one body.' And the Wisdom of God has tempered these two together ; making the separate life the condition of the corporate, yet in such sense that the healthiest working of the separate life is found, not in the keenness of its unit self-consciousness, but in the completeness of its self-forgetfulness in the corporate.

When Christ says, 'I am with you alway,' He addresses Himself to a community. It



matters little, to the truth of this remark, whether those present were the eleven or the five hundred. In either case, it was not a word spoken in the separate ear of St John or St Peter; not the 'Lovest thou me more than these?' and not the 'If I will that he tarry . . . what is that to thee?' These individual utterances have their place and their time, their lesson also for all time, as to the Divine dealing with souls. But when He says 'with you,' He speaks to a community. The promise of the Presence is made primarily to a body.

To the Apostles, you will say. Blessed be God, yes! To those 'holy and humble men of heart,' by whose labour and ministry the light of the Gospel was made to shine through-

out the world. To those preachers and writers of truth, all truth, and nothing but truth, to whom, the longer we live, the more profoundly we think, the more diligently we study, the more every day shall we feel our obligation. We see what the Presence was to the Church, if it had even stopped with the Apostles. We see what Inspiration was, little as we can define it, when we set it over against the very first, the very best, of those fathers of the Church who had it not. But we cannot thus limit the compass of the 'with you.' We cannot read 'the end of the world,' 'the consummation of the age,' as meaning any event or any moment which has yet been. Certainly the fall of Jerusalem did not satisfy it. The fall of Jerusalem gives no sense to the same phrase as it occurs

in the Parables of the Tares and the Net, where it is distinctly declared to represent the time of the Advent and the Judgment, of the severance of the wicked from among the just, and the shining forth of the righteous as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. If that is not yet; then neither was the Perpetual Presence only for the Apostles.

Brethren! I would not willingly utter one word in this place that could jar upon any ear or revive one slumbering controversy. It shall be enough to say that 'you' here is the Church. One man shall understand by the Church an Apostolical Succession; shall think that the promise, spoken here to the Eleven, had in its direct view a perpetuity of guiding and ruling Ministers, tracing their Orders in clear unbroken


line to the Apostles, and representing such of their functions as were not plainly miraculous, to the faithful of all lands and times. Another man shall understand by the Church her gatherings in General Councils, where, in imitation at least of that first assembly at Jerusalem to which we owe it (under God) that Christianity was not made for all time a developement or a sect of Judaism, it may be no presumption to adopt the imposing phraseology, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.' We do not dispute such interpretations, because we see in each and in all a truth, if it be but a partial one; an example, if it be but a single one, of fulfilment by Christ Himself of the promise of the Presence. We know the importance attached by Inspiration itself to the orderly

ministrations, to the regular offices, of Christ's holy Church. The Pentecostal gift itself is made by St Paul, in the 4th chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, to consist in the grant, by the Ascended Lord, of 'Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.' He that despiseth such ministries, despiseth not man but God.

Only, my brethren, we cannot consent to any such interpretation of this august promise as should formalize, nominalize, or localize it. We cannot allow it to be so read as to make it a promise to one Church out of the many Churches of Christendom. It must not be made to depend, for its application, upon par-

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ticular designations, whether Greek, Latin, or English, of Church Officers or Church Governments. Even upon earth Christ was ever met by the questions, 'Where, Lord?' and 'When, Lord?' and 'Speakest Thou unto us, or even to all?' And now that He is not here in the body to answer such limiting, cramping enquiries with His own strong 'Verily'—'Wheresoever the carcase is'—'The kingdom cometh not with observation'—'Say not, Lo, here, or, Lo, there'—of course such narrownesses breed and multiply, till they cause the Gospel itself to be evil spoken of. We must say, reverence and truth alike demanding it, When Christ said 'with you,' and meant 'with the Church,' He spoke, as that beautiful prayer expresses it, of 'the whole congregation of Christian people



dispersed throughout the world ;' and when He promised infallibility—if that promise be a part, and we think that it is, of this mighty world-wide and age-long engagement—He spake of that indeed, that real, 'semper, ubique, ab omnibus,' which is the 'consensus' of 'all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours'—that indeed 'Catholic Faith' which a man has who believes in Christ as His Saviour, though he may enunciate it with lisping, stammering, babbling tongue, or mean by it little more than the grand old baptismal confession, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' . This is that 'public opinion,' that 'common sense,' of all Christendom, which is the blessed unity amidst ten thousand

diversities—a unity of which the home is God's heaven, and its tongue the harmony of God's universe.

We speak not to disparage Creeds or Articles, nor to make light of accuracy in the things of God. It is not by washing out all colour, and it is not by chiselling away all feature, from our Christianity, for the sake of precipitating a complimentary fraternity, that we shall promote the real interests of either truth or charity. It is well that each man should enquire and search diligently for himself into God's Revelations, and that he should grasp tenaciously and feel strongly and maintain earnestly the thing, the exact thing, which he has learned and has been assured of. Only we ask that, as no man but a fool imagines himself to be the only wise, so

each man should be willing to believe that another, expressing himself differently, may have, in his heart and in his soul, the same truth with him, or another truth equally vital. Then, instead of unchurching or unchristianizing one another, we shall have this far higher, far nobler, far more Christ-like satisfaction—we shall believe, where we see not, that the very Gospel lies deeper, spreads wider, rises higher, than one little section of the vast human brotherhood; that Christ is in more places than one, has a voice for more hearts than one, yea, a voice of more sounds than one, like that 'voice of many waters' which St John heard in Patmos; that His promise, 'I am with you always,' is neither to Greek nor Roman nor Briton, still less to Anglican or Evangelical or

Non-Conformist, but to the common human being veiled under each ; and that hereafter, in that which Scripture calls (were it but for this cause) the day of our 'refreshing,' God will indeed 'gather together all things in Christ, both that are in heaven and that are in earth.'

'Lo, I am with you alway.'


What then, we must ask briefly, are some of the characteristics of this Perpetual Presence—in the Church—and in the soul? The words must be few : may they be suggestive.

First, it is a special Presence. There is a Presence in the universe. 'In Christ all things consist'—withdraw Him, and there is chaos. It is not of this Presence that He speaks. I know not that we all believe in any other. I know

not that we have taken into our thoughts this fact—Christ is with His Church as He is not with the world. There is a mind and a will, there is a power and a work, inside this community which a man enters by believing, distinct from that which orders sky and sea, replenishes earth with life, and keeps the stars in their courses. This special Presence is that which accounts for the very start and progress and success of Christianity. What could be so improbable, before the experience, as that a religion born in rude, rough, remote Galilee should ever cross a sea or make one proselyte? What could be so improbable beforehand as a Christendom—a portion of the globe characterized, as to its civilization, as to its moral and social and political life, by the influence of Jesus

Christ? What could be so improbable as that this religion, not patronized by royalty, and not propagated by the sword, could even survive its first exposure to the scorn of established philosophies and the persecution of powerful despotisms? *We* say, It was an enterprise, not audacious only, but inconceivable, save to Omnipotence. *We* ascribe its success to the word of its Author, 'Lo, I am with you alway.'

Secondly, it is a spiritual Presence. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, once dwelt with, now He dwells in, the Church. The corporeal Presence is gone, that the spiritual may come. 'The flesh profiteth nothing'—not if it be the very flesh of Jesus; that flesh which Judas and Herod and Pontius Pilate, scoffing scribe and Roman executioner, looked



upon and handled and were profited nothing—
'it is the Spirit that quickeneth.' Strange,
that any should wish back the carnal Presence
when they have the spiritual! This is that
Presence of which Christ said, 'I will not leave
you comfortless: I will come to you. Because
I live, ye shall live also.' This Presence has
influences direct and constant, which are the
life of the body. What would the Word be,
the Book or the voice, without the Presence?
What would the Sacraments be, the Water or
the Supper, without the Presence? What
would prayer be, public prayer or private,
without the Presence—the Presence of the
assisting Spirit, and the presence of the inter-
ceding Lord? It is the Presence which changes
idle sounds, bare materials, fleeting wishes,

into realities, into instrumentalities, into very 'powers of a world to come.'

Thirdly, it is a manifold Presence. Every gift and every grace is due to it. Every office and every function of the Universal Church is due to it. Not action only, but counteraction; not institution only, but adaptation; not formation only, but reparation—these, too, are parts of it. The orderly workings of grace are mighty and wonderful: what shall we say of the Hand which ministers to the Church's exceptional wants, as they arise out of the manifold changes and chances of worldly circumstance, of human thought? How often has the Christian of one land or one age imagined that the last hour had struck of his Faith or of his Church! He has seen one for-

tress after another stormed by the foe; one doctrine after another impugned, betrayed, trampled upon, by men commissioned to teach; a growing indifference to all religion, not amongst the profane or the profligate, but in minds cultivated and disciplined, loving truth and abhorring evil. His heart has misgiven him for his country's future; and he has sometimes asked himself, in the language, if not in the tone, of the scoffer, 'Where is the promise?' And yet, my brethren, the power of the Presence has not been withdrawn: the medicinal, the remedial, the reparative hand has interposed in its season, making doubt itself minister to humility, and bringing out of the refiner's fiercest fire but a brighter and a more precious gold.

Fourthly, and above all else, it is a sanctifying Presence. Men may cavil at revelation, fight over doctrine, ask all their days, 'What is truth?' There is one thing they dare not malign—and that is holiness. If the Presence were protective only—keeping alive in the earth 'a sign spoken against,' a spiritual religion, offering happiness, offering heaven, on the condition of faith in a Saviour—it might attract the weary and sorrowful, it would not appeal, as now, to the conscience and heart of mankind. Truly has it been said, Over and above the four written Gospels, there is a fifth—written not with ink and pen—the Gospel, already eighteen chapters long, and each chapter is a century, of Christian lives and Christian deaths. I believe that this is practically the evidence which weighs most with this

age. You can explain away, by the help of a strong will and a powerful motive, the evidences of miracle and prophecy and Gospel success: but there lies still, at the bottom of the heart, the sight of some life, the memory of some death, which was either a mere delusion—calm as it was, and grave, and strong, and consistent—or else caused, made what it was, changed perhaps into what it was, by the help, by the power, by the presence, of Him who lived and died and revived, of Him who said, and who has fulfilled it, ‘I am with you alway.’ The Presence is proved by its effect. It is a light, it is a power, it is a life, it is a love: men do know for themselves what is the secret of their life, and other men take knowledge of it whether it is powerful and whether it is pure. If Christ

can transform a life, if Christ can comfort a death, then I may doubt about many things, I may postpone many decisions, I may leave some matters for the light of 'that world,' I may submit to the pain and the misery of some harassing suspenses—but one thing I can see, that this is indeed the Saviour I need: one thing I can resolve, that, through life's ambiguous windings, through the valley of death's dark shadow, He shall be with me—His rod and His staff shall comfort me.


'I am with you all the days till the end of the world.'

And is this 'day' not one of them? Is the Presence lost? is the promise forfeited? Is it lost, ask yourselves, to the Church? is it forfeited by the Church? to the Church, by

the Church, ask yourselves, of this land? Oh! we know, we know too well, her many mistakes, her many shortcomings, her many negligences, her many sins. If it were a pleasure to us, or if it could be a duty, we could count her faults by hundreds and by thousands. We could tell of schisms and heresies, we could tell of sects and separations, we could tell of neglected parishes and mission-fields unoccupied, we could tell of wasted gifts and lost opportunities and ruined lives, we could tell of unfaithful ministries and retrograde movements and reviving superstitions. But have these faults, these unfaithfulnesses, any or all of them, defeated and vitiated the promise? Has there not been, side by side with all these, a mighty counteracting and counterbalancing force of good? Shall

any man presume to say that this or that measure, this or that enactment, if it be carried through, will have lost Christ to His Church? Is it indeed so, that the perpetual Presence is tied to a particular form of words, to the public utterance of a particular form of words, so that, if that be altered or silenced, then Christ will be gone? Shameful, arrogant, presumptuous thought! The Presence is a life, not a word: nothing but habitual wilful sin loses it for the man, and nothing short of utter spiritual death forfeits it for the Church.

Christ is with us still, in this Church of England—never more vividly or more vitally. Never was there a deeper love for Him, for His Word, for His Sacraments, for His little ones.



Never, since He ascended, had He a more devout or a more devoted people. Can you point to any generation, to any century, in which it would have been better for you, spiritually better, to have been born? Can you conceive a greater freedom to know, to worship, and to confess? Can you conceive a larger, a grander sphere for Christian action and for Christian communion? If the Word is now tried to the uttermost, is not that very trial winning for it a more attentive hearing, a profounder study, and a deeper, because more intelligent veneration? Is not division itself (haply for this purpose permitted) not only stimulating each section of the Church to an earnest and not necessarily ungenerous rivalry of good, but also practising us in the twin

graces of hope and charity — bidding us to look beyond uniformity for the reality of unity, and to recognize in other modes alike of government and of worship efforts at least, however imperfect, after a more primitive rule and a more spiritual devotion ?

‘I am with you,’ Christ says, ‘all the days’— and this is one of them.

Brethren, if the promise endures for the Church, how is it with this its famous School and training-place ? Has any change here effected, within or from without, robbed this University of a Divine Presence ?

I know that here also, as in the Church, there are symptoms which a hasty diagnosis might interpret unfavourably. We have not escaped here the infection of free thinking, of

sceptical opinion, of 'oppositions of science falsely so called.' This University would not be national if it were otherwise. A College is not a monastery—it is a little world. It is a specimen of English life, for good and evil. It could not, it would not, bar its doors against the entrance of any thought or any enquiry. Therefore those unsettlements of human opinion, which are rife everywhere, have their representation and their reflection here. But their presence does not shut out Christ's. Rather does it stir into livelier action the faith which is His, and which finds itself in urgent need of all its aids and of all its weapons, if so be it may both keep its own integrity and assimilate the still floating elements which surround it. Here assuredly, if anywhere, enquiry should be free,

because here, if anywhere, the means of its satisfaction are at hand.

And you know, brethren, and we know, that never in the history of this University were the influences of Christian zeal and Christian example larger, stronger, or more persuasive, than now. The means of religious instruction, the encouragements to religious study, instead of being curtailed, are greatly multiplied here since the days of my youth. Christ's Presence is here manifested in ways of which no tests and no subscriptions—feters, always, only to the scrupulous—can take knowledge. Delightful, most delightful, to those who love the highest welfare of their University, are the tidings of a large and growing Association of Students, formed on the broad and strong basis of Christian Com-

munion, for the express purposes of strengthening the spiritual life here, and of sending forth hence, into the various fields of the Church's home and foreign activity, men qualified, both in knowledge and devotion, to serve Christ faithfully in the service of their generation.

O, with such omens, such tokens of good, we will not fear—though the waters roar and be troubled—though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof! Great are the responsibilities, great the perils—greater, for all true men, the encouragements. Work, hope, prayer, these three — and the victory is ours. 'There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.' 'Jesus came and said unto them, All power is given unto

me in heaven and in earth. . . And, lo, I
am with you alway, even unto the end of the
world.'

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